

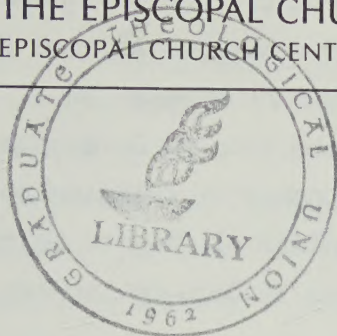
DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

EPISCOPAL CHURCH CENTER • 815 SECOND AVENUE • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017

am D. Dearnaley, News Director
t E. Vetter, Deputy News Director

Telephone: (212) 867-8400



JAN 14 1985

Oct. 11, 1984

CONTENTS

PAGE

● Pastoral, Moral Themes Fill Bishops' Agenda (84191)	1
● Pastoral's Challenge: Don't Trivialize Faith (84192)	6
● Bishop Allin's View: "Focus on Mission" (84193)	8
● Bishops Hear Call to Aid Economists (84194)	10
● Bishops Focus on Central America (84195)	12
● Archbishop Cites Cost of Mission (84196)	15
● Bishops Briefed on Ecumenical Councils (84197)	16
● Attachments: Pastoral Letter, Abortion Issues	

PASTORAL, MORAL THEMES

FILL BISHOPS' AGENDA

84191

JACKSON, Miss.(DPS, Oct. 11) -- A crowded agenda that included action on a pastoral letter, a call that no sale of the Episcopal Church Center building take place until after General Convention, and a study paper on the theological and moral issues surrounding abortion kept the Episcopal Church's House of Bishops in session to the last minute as it wrapped up its 1984 interim meeting here.

The House, which cannot act legislatively for the Church when it is in interim session, concentrates on study and reflection on the Church's ministry and on its own rules and membership. The meetings traditionally start at a leisurely pace, and this was no exception to that rule as the bishops heard an encouraging state of the Church report from Presiding Bishop John M. Allin, and tackled papers and addresses on the theology of deterrance, their role in modern economic communities, and their own pastoral letter process -- in addition to the letter itself and the abortion paper.

-more-

DPS 84191/2

All of those items except the actual pastoral letter and the resolution on the Church Center were on the pre-published agenda, and the papers had been sent to the bishops well in advance of their gathering at the Holiday Inn, Downtown Sept. 29 through Oct 4. It was because of this that they were able to take the time to develop a strongly-worded Pastoral Letter on the relationship of religion to politics that upholds the right of all religious points of view to be heard in shaping public policy but challenges religious leaders not to let the political rhetoric trivialize faith.

The decision to write such a Letter was made on the first day with a resolution submitted by the Bishop of Michigan. While a number of bishops argued that they did not want to publish a letter which might not carry an overwhelming consensus of the House, the Bishops agreed quickly to ask the committee to produce a draft and then test the consensus question. What emerged was a letter that passed with no audible opposition and whose passage was followed by a strong round of applause.

Asserting their faith in the strength of the principle of separation of church and state, the bishops argue that because of that, they welcome the fact "that voices are being heard on religion in the society today even when they are voices of those with whom we may disagree or even of those whose methods are demagogic and seem to violate the very freedom which permits them to speak."

Referring to the "wall of separation" which divides governmental and religious institutions, the bishops note that no similar wall "can separate religious belief and the shaping of public policy. To separate religion from politics is to impoverish both. The prophetic voice adds a vital perspective in the shaping of public policy."

The Letter notes the role of religious leaders in combating abuses of this freedom and the duty to proclaim God's peace, shalom as the basis of religion in politics, and concludes "Let the religious commitments of the candidates be measured by their stands and actions on the questions where human survival and the possibilities of international justice and peace are at stake." (EDs: Letter attached. See also DPS 84192, page 6).

-more-

In other action on the Pastoral Letter, the House discussed a new process for producing such letters, a process which will involve a commitment to a topic, up to a year of study, consultation and circulation of drafts in order to produce more thoughtful documents designed to have a lasting teaching impact on the Church. It is a process -- although not yet refined -- that is likely to be similar to that followed by the National Conference of (Roman) Catholic Bishops in producing their major documents, such as the one last year on peace.

The abortion paper reflected a similar process, although what was given to the House was only the first draft. At its meeting last year in Spokane, the House had asked the Theology Committee to reflect on the moral, theological and biblical implications of the Church's 1976 General Convention resolution on abortion issues. In presenting the 16-page paper to the House, the panel chairman, Bishop William G. Weinbauer of Western North Carolina, emphasized that "this is not a position paper. It is a theological reflection written to elicit and provoke your discussion."

The panel stuck to that mandate, laying out alternative views on the nature and start of life, personhood versus simple biological life, social needs and biblical interpretations fully -- even if they conflict with views commonly held in the Episcopal Church -- in order to create the broadest study and reflection within the Church. The paper is careful to raise questions rather than lay down dogma.

Weinbauer explained that the committee started from the same premise that the Convention resolution did: That human life, as God's creation and gift, must be respected, protected and sustained. Their stress on the overriding pastoral element of the paper is summed up near the end when they say: "For parents who have voluntarily chosen to have children in tragic circumstances,... the Church should be a place of love, encouragement and support...The Church must always be, as well, a special place of God's forgiveness, love and support for those who have had to face the tragic circumstance of abortion." The paper -- after some likely revision -- will be circulated to the Church as a study document through the Church Center staff. (EDs: paper attached).

-more-

DPS 84191/4

Before taking up either the pastoral letter or the abortion issues, the bishops got the good news from Allin that the Church seems to have halted and even reversed the losses of membership suffered over the past decades.

The Presiding Bishop -- who will retire at the end of 1985 -- was chairing the last interim meeting of the House he has led for 11 years and been a member of since 1961. His low-key address was entitled "A View from the Helicopter" and he characterized it as "a look at the traffic flow, warning of some roadblocks, looking for the smooth path." Although low key, the chief pastor and primate was not diffident, winning a strong burst of applause as he told the bishops, "I may be a duck, but I'm not lame." Allin told the bishops he would create no new programs between now and Convention but would continue to emphasize the five functions of mission that emerged from the 1982 Convention and would seek to "hand over the baton at full speed" to his successor. As to who that will be, Allin urged the bishops to keep in the mind the broad needs of the Church for a "servant, an enabler and a pastor. There are many in this House who can fill that role."

The Church Allin's successor takes over will be different from the one in which the chief pastor was ordained 40 years ago. Allin told the bishops that the statistical turnaround was due primarily to adult conversions and that the Episcopal Church membership is now made up by more than 60 percent of members who were not "cradle Episcopalians." (Eds: See DPS # 84193 on page 8).

One unscheduled item -- a resolution on the sale of the Church Center building -- was one of the few to generate any controversy, but in the end the House voted overwhelmingly to recommend to the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church that no sale be consummated until the report of the location committee is made to the next General Convention.

That measure -- which is only advisory -- arose because two provinces (II and VIII) and a number of dioceses had questioned the right of the Executive Council to authorize sale of the building at a time when a Convention mandate had asked for a location study on the Church Center to be completed and reported back to the Los Angeles Convention. Council will re-examine its authorization at its meeting the end of this month.

The two-part "Mind of the House" resolution does not address the merits of the sale, or the location of the Center in New York. Noting the mandate of the location panel, it simply recommends against a sale until that panel reports. In the debate, many of the bishops who favored the action conceded that the Council, as a corporate board of directors, did have a right to dispose of the building but asserted that to do so when the proposal had not been part of the published agenda and while the location committee had not reported violated the spirit of the Convention mandate.

Overall, the House presented and acted on few resolutions beyond those dealing with the status of bishops or its own structure. One item left over from last year -- the rules of order for the election of a Presiding Bishop -- was cleared up when the House agreed to "meet in executive session in a church to discuss the nominees presented at the Joint Session, and to elect a Presiding Bishop from among those nominees."

Nevada Bishop Wesley Frensdorff led a move to change "executive" to "regular" asserting that the Church should not get the impression that the bishops needed to operate in secrecy. His effort failed against the prevailing notion that an undisturbed session, conducted in the context of a Eucharist, was the desire of most of the members.


In other actions, the House:

- Supported a Senate resolution designed to restore the "parsonage" allowance as a tax deduction;

- Pressed for continued major power dialog on nuclear disarmament and urged that the Feast of Transfiguration, 1985 (anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing) be used a special opportunity to raise the call for world peace and disarmament; and,

- Opposed, under current conditions, relocation of the United States Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

The House began each day with Morning Prayer and a lecture on the "Presence of Christ" by Oxford theologian John MacQuarrie and built in time for provincial dinners, a banquet honoring Allin, and the gracious hospitality of Mississippi Episcopalians. The entire House, their spouses, guests and staff worshipped at St. Andrew's Cathedral Sunday when a Seabury Window, executed by a local artist, was dedicated to the ministry of Allin. A reception and garden lunch followed the service.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE/ Episcopal Church Center 212/867-8400

PASTORAL'S CHALLENGE:

DON'T TRIVIALIZE FAITH

DPS 84192

JACKSON, Miss. (DPS, Oct. 11) -- In a strongly-worded pastoral letter, bishops of the Episcopal church have hailed the right and duty of all religious leaders to speak out on public issues and called on people of faith to focus on the "issues that deeply affect human welfare and...human life."

The letter -- the second draft on the topic -- was accepted on a voice vote that seemed to be unanimous. A brief debate had resulted in the only charge; dropping one example that some felt would have detracted from the overall tone of the letter. The round of applause that followed the final vote suggests that this letter will receive more than minimal canonical attention from the bishops.

Canons require that a pastoral letter be read from every pulpit during a Sunday service or distributed to each member of a congregation within a month; a requirement that gives the letters strong degree of moral suasion in the Church.

The letter itself retells the history of the separation of Church and State and asserts that "Despite the rhetoric of some political candidates and church leaders today, our trust in our system leads us to believe that the principle of the separation of church and state is in no serious jeopardy...In that regard, we must welcome -- not condemn -- the fact that voices are being heard on religion in the society today even when they are the voices of those with whom we may disagree or even of those whose methods are demagogic and seem to violate the very freedom which permits them to speak."

"From our perspective," the bishops continued, "The Church has a prophetic role to play, settled long ago in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. The moral imperatives of our faith compel us to address the pressing issues of the day. Biblical religion can never separate creation into realms in which God is present and others in which he is not. If in some sense a 'wall of separation' is seen to be drawn between the institutions of the church and those of the state, there is no legitimate separation between religious belief and the shaping of public pol-

DPS 84192/2

icy. To separate religion from politics is to impoverish both. The prophetic voice adds a vital perspective in the shaping of public policy. Religion serves its proper function when it seeks to speak on behalf of the voiceless the voice of God among the powers of any society. That is an essential element of the people's free expression of religion, no matter how much controversy may be generated by it."

The letter moves from the rights to what the bishops see as the responsibilities. "This responsibility is in part protecting the right of others to speak. Clearly there are disagreements on issues and candidates. But, at a deeper level of truth, both religious and political, we of the Christian faith are bound by standards of truth telling and fairness...That is a demanding task, far more difficult than one of accepting simple answers to complex issues, or of accepting the reduction of the search for the common good to slogans and one issue politics."

Asserting that abuses of coercion, bigotry and ridicule need "to be pointed out and resisted in the name of justice and the common good," the letter goes on to assert a further role for the Church. "From the time of the Hebrew prophets, that role has been one of summoning the nation to God's peace shalom. The debate about issues of Church and State in the present campaign deflects the attention of the nation away from those questions which are vital to human survival itself. Instead of talking about the religion of various candidates, we should be considering how they address such issues as the nuclear arms race, the relations between East and West, the growing number of refugees, hunger at home and abroad, and the widening gap between rich and poor among the nations and within this country. Overlooking these issues which deeply affect human welfare and even human life has the effect of trivializing both and the political process."

Reflecting on the members of the House that come from a variety of third world countries -- many impoverished, many oppressed, the bishops noted, "We and they both know that not a single day passes in their nations which is unaffected both positively and negatively by the actions of the Government of the United States. Let the religious commitments of the candidates be measured by their stands and actions on the questions where human survival and the possibilities of international justice and peace are at stake."

DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE/ Episcopal Church Center 212/867-8400

BISHOP ALLIN'S VIEW:

"FOCUS ON MISSION"

DPS 84193

JACKSON, Miss (DPS, Oct. 11) — Presiding Bishop John M. Allin reported a turnaround in membership loss in the Episcopal Church in his address to the House of Bishops but cautioned his fellow chief pastors that "our concern for one lost sheep needs to be stimulated."

Calling his remarks "A View from the Helicopter," Allin used much of his 40-minute address to encourage the bishops to stimulate their congregations to continue the self-examination of the five functions of mission which emerged from the 1982 General Convention. He reiterated the point that "our task is increasing direct personal involvement of every member in the mission."

Even while noting the statistical turnaround, Allin was reminding the bishops that the Church had suffered great losses over the years and said that the church should be concerned "not with simply increasing the club membership, but with increasing the effectiveness of the mission."

He told the bishops that he would continue to ask their help in raising this emphasis and reported that he would bring no broad new program before the General Convention next year, but would seek to "hand over the baton running" to his successor.

In the matter of his successor, Allin urged the bishops to keep in mind the broad needs of the Church for a "servant, an enabler, and a pastor. There are many in this House who can fill that role." The circumstances of the post and the needs of the world would shape any such bishop into the prophet or teacher needed at the time, he suggested.

Turning to specific issues, the chief pastor and primate tried to link them to the overarching mission needs. He suggested, for example, that a reform of the divorce and remarriage canons may have made them "too loose to be supportive...We have got people out there who are fragmented."

Commenting on governmental relations, he said: "I find we always get a thoughtful personal response when we seek out our Episcopa-

DPS 84193/2

lians in government. We may not always agree, and we need to find every possible way to move them, but this is a ministry that needs to be carried on, a ministry to engage them in the mission."

Citing a personal distaste for concelebrations he noted that "after we have taken such steps to enhance the active participation of the laity in the service, through readings and the offeratory, to then see ten priests lined up behind the altar looks like the last stand of the priests' club."

Allin characterized his address as an overview, "a look at the traffic flow, warning of some road blocks, looking for the smooth path" and delivered it in a low-key fashion. But he seemed, throughout, to retain a sense of keen vision and a strong sense of how he saw his last 15 months in office, telling the bishops -- to a strong burst of applause "I may be a duck, but I'm not lame."

In commenting on the population trend, Allin based his remarks on a paper issued in September by the Rev. John A. Schultz, statistical officer at the Church Center. That report notes that the most severe losses suffered by the church -- upwards of 56,000 a year beginning in 1967 -- actually declined during the intense controversies of the mid- and late 1970's. Figures for the last two years, Allin said, actually show a small net gain.

Most significantly, he added, it was adult converts that have sustained the Church during a time when "normal losses by death and our high drop-out rate would have extinguished the Church." Now, more than 60 percent of the members "came to us by choice as adults."

Discussing the high drop-out rate, Allin pointed out that lapsed Episcopalians rarely join other Churches and told the bishops that "Our concern for one lost sheep needs to be stimulated. ... There are a large number of people who need our ministry, who have had some affinity for it in the past, and might be ready at some time and under some circumstances to welcome it. The time might even be now."

###

DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE/ Episcopal Church Center 212/867-8400

BISHOPS HEAR CALL

TO AID ECONOMISTS

DPS 84194

JACKSON, Miss. (DPS, Oct. 11) -- In his speech to the House of Bishops meeting here, Gar Alperovitz, co-director of the National Center for Economic Alternatives, challenged members to use their vision to bring about economic and social change.

Alperovitz was introduced by the Rt. Rev. John H. Burt, retired Bishop of Ohio, who chairs the Urban Bishop's Coalition, with which Alperovitz has worked on such projects as the revitalization of the Youngstown, Ohio steel mill. The bishops had been sent advance copies of a paper by Alperovitz, entitled "The Centrality of Community -- and of Planning to Sustain It", which served as the basis for his talk.

Having stated the importance of the religious community in access to and stimulating response on economic issues -- such as Youngstown -- and the consequent need for the religious community to recognize the necessity of dealing with economics, Alperovitz touched on six main points. The first was "Economics is too important to be left to the economists," which was followed by the caution that disastrous "sins of omission" are committed when people use excuses such as pleading the complexity of issues or disagreement of experts to avoid getting involved in economic planning.

His third point, and one which recurred in both the paper and the discussion, was that there is no fundamental lack of economic resources in America but that distribution of these requires moral responsibility. In urging the bishops to bring their values to economic planning, Alperovitz said, "In a society so wealthy, the issue of what we do cannot be bypassed with technical statistics." Another factor needing consideration, he said, is that we cannot assume the future will be like the present, particularly with reference to the current economic recovery, which he suggested will not last. He noted that both conservative and liberal analysts predict economic and social crises, and as his sixth point, that of all advanced, capitalistic, industrial societies, the United States is the only one with "a fundamental division among the working class racially."

-more-

DPS 84194/2

Moving on, Alperovitz stated his belief that problems are growing faster than our current capacity to respond along familiar lines and added that for new solutions to be found, these problems must be challenged not only by economists and politicians, but by those whose vision is broader. He commended the bishops for having begun to confront these issues and, calling for their continued and increasing involvement, concluded that such leadership "is not only important, but perhaps the only thing that can save democracy."

There was then a panel discussion by Alperovitz and four members of the House: the Rt. Rev. Duncan Gray of Mississippi, the Rt. Rev. John Walker of Washington, D.C., the Rt. Rev. Telesforo Isaac of the Dominican Republic, and the Rt. Rev. Arthur Walmsley of Connecticut, followed by questions from the floor. During that time, many of the bishops expressed unease with the optimistic tone of the social economist. Bishop Edward Jones of Indianapolis, referring to predictions earlier in the decade that new high-technology industries would create waves of new jobs, said that his perception was rather that many of these were low-paying, dead-end jobs and that the technological revolution might put more people out of work.

Alperovitz responded that the impact of technology had been somewhat overreported, agreed that too many such jobs were dead end, but re-emphasized his point that the economy need not be trapped by technology.

In response to the issue of financing a deficit versus the dangers of balancing a budget at the expense of the poor, he said again, "History is not inevitable, people make history. Talking about the deficit, rather than working to put people back to work -- every one percent of unemployment cost the economy \$30 billion -- is choice."

###

DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE/ Episcopal Church Center 212/867-8400

BISHOPS FOCUS ON
CENTRAL AMERICA

DPS 84195

JACKSON, Miss. (Oct. 11) — The problems of Central America and the Church's response to these occupied the discussions of the House of Bishops meeting here on two separate occasions, prompting a resolution which reaffirmed support for withdrawal of troops and the Contadora process and called for wider granting of political asylum and a massive economic aid program.

The morning session on Oct. 2 was largely devoted to the report of the Presiding Bishop's Central America Taskforce. A film based on the group's report was shown, and afterward taskforce members Sonia Francis, the Rev. Patrick Mauney, and the Rev. Charles Cesaretti of the Church Center staff joined Bishops Cornelius Wilson (Costa Rica and Nicaragua), Armando Guerra-Sola (Guatemala), Leopold Frade (Honduras), and Leonardo Romero-Rivera (Northern Mexico and El Salvador) for response and discussion.

Wilson, who spoke first, declined to place himself on the side of either Marxism or capitalism, saying he felt neither had "the" solution. Instead, he emphasized the suffering of the people. He commended to the bishops the "Contadora" process, wherein Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, and other nations in Central America are seeking a regional settlement of conflict, and added "We don't need intervention, we need freedom to choose."

Guerra began in a similar vein, saying "we suffer from both sides." He then moved on to issue a call for the Church to act as a voice of reconciliation, listening and ministering to all. "It is easier to go to one side or the other," he said, "but my brothers, I can tell you that it is more difficult to be in between and try to heal."

In his statement, Frade commended the report, in particular mentioning its balanced nature, and called the bishops' attention to the "Further Observations" section as being representative of the point of view of the people of Honduras. He also spoke of the pervasive feeling of fear in his country, both among supporters of the present government and among the "loyal opposition", of "being abandoned by American

DPS 84195/2

troops." He told of the work going on in Honduras with refugees, mostly Nicaraguans and Miskito Indians, and ended with "We ask your prayers so we can continue to have peace."

Speaking of his experiences in El Salvador, Romero told of the need for caution in statements, but said, "The people are sick and tired of the political situation...They want peace." He added that there was a feeling among many that, with the present government under Jose Napoleon Duarte, a Contadora settlement would be adequate politically, but that after peace long-term problems would remain to be solved. Some of those he mentioned were land reform, community development, and development of indigenous leadership. Nevertheless, Romero noted that with its CREDHO organization, El Salvador has the strongest social ministry program in the Ninth Province of the Episcopal Church. It also has the most church-related martyrs.

In the discussion period, a number of bishops expressed concern over the refugee situation and sought ways to respond. In answer, Frade stressed pacification of the area as most important, adding that "We need to address ourselves as well as the U.S. government in attending to needs." Romero pointed to the Companion Diocese program as another way to help.

The Rt. Rev. Anselmo Carral-Solar, former Bishop of Guatemala, expressed happiness with the report, especially with its attention to spiritual needs of the people of Central America, and he quoted an old Spanish proverb, "It is better to see something being done, even if it is late, than wait and never see it done." He emphasized his hope that the interest shown by the Episcopal Church in Central America "will continue to be a pastoral concern and not a political one" and cautioned that "Anyone who has lived there knows the solution is not to have this country intervene, but let's not be so naive or stupid as to believe that the only foreign intervention in the area is from the U.S.A."

Bishop William Wantland of Eau Claire agreed, stressing the danger of seeing things simplistically. He quoted a Miskito Indian leader, who had told him, "The Sandinistas shoot us in front, the Americans shoot us in the back."

The ecumenical nature of much of the work done in Central

America was also a topic of discussion.

The bishops returned to the subject of Central America on Thursday afternoon with the presentation by the Rt. Rev. Furman Stough, Bishop of Alabama, of a resolution relating to that area. Submitted by the Bishop of New York, Paul Moore, and originally referred to the House's Committee on National and International Affairs, the resolution affirms past actions of the Episcopal Church calling for withdrawal of foreign forces from Central America and supporting the Contadora process.

Further resolves receive with gratitude and commend the report of the Central America Taskforce; urge the President and Congress to adopt a policy of granting political asylum to Central American refugees with no other safe option for residence; and call for the development of a "Marshall Plan" type of program, tied to observance of human rights, aimed at reducing poverty in Central America and thereby promoting stability and freedom.

Asked to speak to the issue, Wilson stated that it was the belief of many in Central America that the United States and Soviet Union are capable of compromise on issues, and that they must be encouraged to do so here in order to bring about peace and end the arms sale business. He asked that the resolution be passed and instead of sending arms, "send means so that we can better social conditions and also justice."

The Rt. Rev. Maurice Benitez of Texas expressed qualms about the first resolve, citing statements which had been made earlier of gratitude among some in Central America for the presence of American troops. However, he gave enthusiastic support to the last resolve, saying "We need to address this poverty in a massive and unprecedented way. We should undertake this for Christian reasons, but if not for those, then for ourselves instead, because unrest will continue in Central America as long as poverty does."

At the request of Frade, the resolve concerning political asylum was amended from "Salvadorans" to the more inclusive "Central Americans." With that wording, the entire resolution was passed unanimously.

###

ARCHBISHOP CITES

COST OF MISSION

DPS 84196

JACKSON, Miss. (DPS, Oct. 11) -- New Zealand Archbishop Paul A. Reeves was quick to set the context of his sermon Sept. 30 before a congregation of bishops, their families and the burghers of the Cathedral parish of St. Andrews.

Reeves, who is in part of native New Zealand (Maori) decent and partly British educated, has been concerned with cross-cultural ministries and with the effect of culture on ministry. In his sermon -- in a city which the day before had hosted a "peace through strength" rally -- he moved immediately to state the objection of South Pacific peoples to the nuclear arms race. Noting that New Zealand had recently banned vessels carrying nuclear weapons in spite of traditional friendship with the United States, he told the people of Jackson and the American bishops that peoples of the South Pacific were more afraid of the arms race than of any particular nation and won a spontaneous round of applause in doing so.

Reeves moved from that pronouncement to an examination of mission, an examination in which he noted repeatedly the necessity of taking risks, letting go, sharing "silver and gold" as mandates of the Gospel.

The archbishop seemed to find a receptive audience in a city that is partially supported by one of the three most successful navy yards in the country as he pressed that message home in a variety of ways.

Noting that when Anglicans ordain a priest, part of the ritual includes "piling clothes" on the ordinand, he pointed to the contrast of a Buddhist ordination wherein the ordinand is stripped at the end and washes the feet of those who will ordain him, he concluded that the Gospel called "on us to travel light."

Referring to Peter's healing of the lame beggar in Acts, he asked, "If we have only a measure of silver and gold, will we let the poor and oppressed stand up and walk? Even more, will we even try?"

"Do we have that deep compassion that compels us to share with those who suffer?," he asked, warning "It is going to cost us something."

DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE/ Episcopal Church Center 212/867-8400

BISHOPS BRIEFED ON
ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

DPS 84197

JACKSON, Miss. (DPS, Oct. 11) -- The presence of ecumenical guest speakers distinguished the House of Bishops' Thursday morning discussion of participation in the National and World Council of Churches.

Described by Presiding Bishop John M. Allin as "seasoned friends," Dr. Robert W. Neff, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren General Board and chairman of the National Council of Churches Presidential Panel, and the Rev. Dr. Paul A. Crow, Jr., president of the Council on Christian Unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and member of the World Council of Churches' Central Committee, both made presentations to the House. Following this, they were joined by the Rev. William Norgren, ecumenical officer at the Episcopal Church Center, for discussion with the bishops.

In keeping with the National Council of Church's current self-evaluation, Neff's presentation dealt largely with ways that organization could improve its corporate life. Among these were to become more inclusive in fellowship, deepen worship and theological life, become more integrated in terms of the relationship between the governing board and program units, to learn to set priorities, and encourage greater participation by member denominations.

Crow also appealed for greater participation, specifically by the Episcopal Church in the World Council of Churches. He emphasized the uniqueness of the experience which the World Council offers in universality, calling that body "a complicated fellowship of churches with only one thing in common and that is that they confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour."

Other issues addressed by Crow included the struggle between issues of faith and order and those of justice and development, tensions over the imbalance of East and West in terms of criticism, and the need for partnership with the Roman Catholic Church -- which he differentiated from membership. He also touched on criticism of the World Council of Churches, and spoke of the need to recognize criticism by those deeply committed to the Council and its work as separate and distinct from "deliberate attempts to marginalize the influence of the World Council of Churches."

DPS 84197/2

During the discussion period, the Rt. Rev. C. Charles Vache of the Diocese of Southern Virginia cited a survey of the bishops in which a question on whether to strengthen ties with other denominations had received the largest positive response. This was reflected in many of the bishops' statements, although there was some concern about being overwhelmed with materials from various ecumenical groups. There was also much praise for the ecumenical work being done, in particular the recent World Council of Churches accord on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. Among the last of the bishops to speak was the Rt. Rev. Robert P. Atkinson of West Virginia, who called the session "One of the most helpful 90 minutes I've ever had."

In closing out the discussion, Allin asked all the bishops to consider the "very nature of representation and participation within the councils of churches," adding, "this can't be a matter of drumbeating and loyalties."

###